



DO YOU KNOW WHO'S IN THE CHAIR?

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA 2016 BATEMAN CAMPAIGN

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Do you know who's in the chair next to you? What's his or her story? Where is he or she from? Where has he or she been? Simple questions with many answers. With more than 1,000 student veterans sitting in chairs at the University of Alabama (UA), one could be sitting next to you in English class or at the table across from you in the library. You might be passing each other on the quad or cheering on the Crimson Tide in Bryant-Denny Stadium.

According to BestColleges.com, the University of Alabama is the second-best military-friendly college in the nation. Despite this recognition, one in every 35 students is a veteran who may feel misunderstood, disconnected and invisible during his or her transition back to civilian life.

For Tyler Hohbach, a student veteran and treasurer of the Campus Veterans Association (CVA), attending orientation at UA left him feeling alienated and extremely uncomfortable.

"I didn't know anyone there, which normally isn't a problem for me, except everyone was 18 years old and I was 24. I felt like I had made a mistake coming here without knowing anyone, and had I not already signed a lease and turned in my military paperwork to leave active duty, I might have decided to just stay in the military and continue with online classes. Finally, I got an email about the Campus Veterans Association, and from that day forward my transition was much better from a social perspective. I still struggled with many of the other transitional challenges: adapting to college culture, learning that my priorities didn't always line up with traditional students' priorities while in group projects, moving away from military lingo and verbiage and dealing with shortfalls in the GI Bill."

The UA PRSSA Bateman team worked hand-in-hand with CVA to increase engagement among student veterans and gain support from traditional students and faculty. We concentrated on recognizing student veterans by advocating for policy changes and cultivating long-lasting relationships with various campus organizations and CVA.

The team utilized the rapidly-growing and engaging digital scope to connect student veterans, traditional students and faculty and staff on campus with CVA. We focused on getting the message across about who's in the chair through Instagram and an interactive website. Each day a new story was posted to the Instagram account and linked back to the website.

The team hosted various events, created petitions and acted as liaisons during the Student Government Association elections to effectively communicate the overall message of recognizing and honoring student veterans at UA.. Learn how UA's PRSSA Bateman team and CVA used one chair to unite the campus community by encouraging individuals to learn more about who's in the chair.



SITUATION ANALYSIS

Student Veterans of America (SVA) exists to provide military veterans with the resources, support and advocacy needed to succeed during and after higher education. The problem at UA is not a lack of resources, but a lack of awareness of those resources. CVA has many benefits of membership, such as professional networking, a study lounge and a supportive community for active members. However, of the 1,038 veterans enrolled, only nine are active members of CVA. There is a lack of knowledge of how to support student veterans among traditional students and faculty and little to no advocacy for student veterans among the university's administration, faculty and diversity groups.

'Do You Know Who's in the Chair' launched at a key time. Student veteran's advocacy has become a hot-button issue at UA. Several Student Government Association members ran for office with priority registration for classes - who gets to register for classes first and in what order - for student veterans and student veteran advocacy as part of their platform. Thanks to these new advocates, positive change for student veterans is on the horizon.

To better understand the target audience's attitudes, the team studied articles, government websites and other military surveys. The va.gov website provided substantial information and demographic percentages about the diversity of student veterans. The SVA website stated its mission, programs, major initiatives and other information about the group. We also researched information about student veterans' advocacy at other university campuses and state legislation that gives student veterans priority registration.

- There are 1,038 student veterans on the UA campus, making one in 35 students a student veteran
- Forty-seven percent of student veterans have children and 47.3 percent are married
- Only 15 percent of student veterans are traditionally-aged college students (18-23)
- Student veterans are trying to find a balance between not being singled out but still being recognized for their service
- Sixty-two percent of student veterans are first-generation college students

PRIMARY RESEARCH

The UA PRSSA Bateman team conducted primary research in the form of a survey sent out to UA students, faculty and staff (A 45-47). We also interviewed the CVA executive board to get an in-depth understanding of student veterans and how they perceive themselves and their place on campus (A 43). One of our team members attended a faculty diversity panel with several student veteran speakers to gain insight (A 44).

SURVEY:

- There were 416 respondents to the initial survey
- Eighty-five percent of respondents believe it is very important to provide resources for student veterans
- Eighty-one percent of respondents believe student veterans are very or somewhat deserving of priority registration
- Eighty-nine percent of respondents are supportive of a POW/MIA chair in UA's main athletic stadiums
- Only 43 percent of respondents knew about CVA on campus



TARGET AUDIENCES & KEY MESSAGES



Throughout the campaign, the focus was on three main target audiences. The first was student veterans, the second was traditional students and the third was faculty and staff. We focused on these three and tailored the campaign to reach each of them in different and compelling ways.

PRIMARY AUDIENCE **Student Veterans:** More than 1,000 student veterans attend UA; however, CVA is composed of 234 students, with nine active members. The goal of the campaign was to unite student veterans on campus by introducing those who were unaware of CVA to the organization and increase the number of active members in CVA.

SECONDARY AUDIENCE **Traditional Students:** Student veterans feel invisible to traditional students. They don't want to be singled out but at the same time want to be recognized, similar to other minority groups on campus. Student veterans also feel there is a lack of understanding between traditional students and themselves. The goal of this campaign was to help veterans feel more included and welcome on campus by building long-lasting and meaningful relationships with traditional students.

Faculty and Staff: The UA faculty was an important audience for this campaign. Faculty do not receive any information regarding current student veterans in their classes. They also do not go through any sensitivity training concerning veterans, making it hard for them to understand why they need to accommodate student veterans. This was all very important to consider when generating a plan to ensure a successful relationship between student veterans and professors long after the implementation of the campaign.

KEY MESSAGES The key messages of the 'In The Chair' campaign revolve around providing student veterans with a voice at UA. Survey research indicated traditional students were unaware of UA's large and continually growing student veteran population. While creating 'In The Chair,' our team wanted to do more than just bring awareness to this demographic. The campaign aimed to personally connect the campus community with veterans. We wanted them to understand veterans. Most importantly, we wanted them to embrace veterans as members of the student body. Using storytelling, the team highlighted connections between traditional students, faculty, staff and student veterans, which served as a breeding ground for support for the U.S. Military. Using this message as a base, we gathered support from all corners of campus, allowing us to further the campaign's goals.

- **DO YOU KNOW WHO'S IN THE CHAIR?** Using Instagram and InTheChairUA.weebly.com, the team encouraged traditional students, student veterans, faculty and staff to sit in the chair. These individuals shared stories about their connection to the military and their reasons for supporting it, both on and off campus. One of the primary goals was placing a POW/MIA chair in various UA athletic venues because it shows the UA community and the rest of the nation that UA supports its military population both here and abroad. We prepared and presented a proposal to the athletic department by securing a meeting with Brad Ledford, assistant athletics director for marketing. Additionally, through various channels and efforts, we gathered support from the UA community regarding the placement of a POW/MIA chair to show the athletic department how beneficial this would be for the university.
- **MAKE SURE THEY STAY IN THE CHAIR** In order to ensure that student veterans have a fair opportunity to pursue higher education, the campaign educated the campus community about the GI Bill and the importance of student veterans receiving priority registration. We served as a liaison for CVA during UA Student Government Association elections by meeting with candidates and encouraging the addition of CVA and priority registration to their platforms.
- **BE AWARE OF WHO'S IN THE CHAIR** CVA emphasized the lack of education some faculty members at UA had when it came to properly interacting with student veterans. Through faculty outreach, the team took a clear, concise and informational approach to teaching faculty members how to engage with student veterans in their classes and the unique circumstances facing their academic careers.
- **PULL UP A CHAIR** When veterans leave the military and become college students, they often don't want to be very involved in student life beyond the classroom. To combat this, the team wanted to showcase CVA and its dedication to veterans. By using an informational mixer, the team provided UA student veterans with an opportunity to learn the benefits of joining CVA, while discovering a new support system through meeting its members. With the help of local businesses, the team hosted several fundraisers to raise money for CVA to further its efforts to provide student veterans with the best college experience possible.



CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

CHALLENGE 1:

After multiple in-depth interviews and client meetings, The Bateman team realized the communication strategy for the campaign needed to be dynamic. Student veterans want to be recognized, but at the same time neither praised nor honored by default. Research gathered at meetings with CVA indicates many veterans feel uncomfortable during public recognition, such as 'Salute to Service' memorials at athletic games. The team needed to raise awareness in a way that wouldn't make student veterans uncomfortable but would instead unite the campus community.

OPPORTUNITY 1:

When communicating the overall message, the team took advantage of the predominant sense of patriotism across UA's campus. Instead of singling out student veterans, this campaign blended student veterans into the campus community by encouraging traditional students and faculty members to share how the military impacts their lives. It showcased individuals who had parents, siblings, grandparents and significant others who served our great nation to show the campus community and student veterans the importance and impact that accompanies serving in the military.

CHALLENGE 2:

The Campus Veterans Association receives limited funding from the university, which can be a challenge for an organization trying to gain awareness and members on a large campus.

OPPORTUNITY 2:

A month-long concentrated campaign gave the community a chance to give back to student veterans. The team planned various fundraising events with businesses in the area. These fundraisers included percentage nights at Wheelhouse Sports Pub, Black Warrior Brewing Company and BurgerFi.

CHALLENGE 3:

When speaking with members of CVA and other student veterans on campus, one major concern they had was the necessity for priority registration. All veterans receive benefits from the GI Bill, a federal funding bill allowing student veterans to procure a higher education degree. The GI Bill eases the financial burdens that come with a veteran's efforts to obtain a college degree. However, the GI Bill does not come without complication; it can be difficult for veterans to receive their GI Bill funding on time and without conflict. Due to all of this, one of CVA's goals included getting priority registration to avoid complications with class scheduling for student veterans at UA. However, the registrar's office has been unresponsive in developing a plan of action.

OPPORTUNITY 3:

During the time of the campaign, the University of Alabama held SGA elections. We took full advantage of this opportunity to find candidates who would include CVA on their platform while encouraging priority registration. This was extremely successful and got the campus community talking about the importance of priority registration for student veterans and ensured this issue would continue to hold significance in the university's eyes.

OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES & TACTICS



STUDENT VETERANS:

Objective 1: Increase the total number of CVA active members by engaging five more student veterans by March 15, 2016. *Rationale: A large number of inactive members is a key concern for CVA. Member participation and contribution to an organization is essential when measuring success. The overall goal was to showcase the importance of participation and encourage more involvement throughout the chapter.*

Strategy A: Use communication materials to build a stronger relationship within the CVA organization

Tactic 1: Develop a visual identity system including the following design materials: logo, letterhead, business cards and newsletter (A-1)

Tactic 2: Create and maintain an Instagram account and website representing the overall theme of the campaign (A-7, A-33)

Tactic 3: Create original content to post on CVA's existing Facebook and Twitter accounts (A-18, A-27)

Strategy B: Use event planning to communicate the benefits of joining the Campus Veterans Association by connecting student veterans with the organization and its current members

Objective 2: Raise \$300 for the UA's Campus Veterans Association. *Rationale: It is important for CVA to have funds to buy any necessary supplies and plan events for the chapter. Fundraising is a very important aspect of any nonprofit organization and was the main focus of the campaign. These fundraisers also give the community a chance to support CVA and connect traditional students with student veterans.*

Strategy A: Use event planning to raise money for Campus Veterans Association

Tactic 1: Partner with businesses and restaurants in the Tuscaloosa community to host fundraising events (A-5)

TRADITIONAL STUDENTS:

Objective 1: Increase awareness of student veterans amongst traditional students by 10 percent by March 15, 2016. *Rationale: Survey results indicated traditional students were unaware of just how large the student veteran population was at UA. The highest recorded answer was between 100 and 300 - with between 301 and 500 a close second - when, in actuality, there are more than 1,000 student veterans on campus. The first objective for traditional students was to increase this awareness by 10 percent and, in turn, connect traditional students with student veterans.*

Strategy A: Use external communication materials to connect traditional students and student veterans

Tactic 1: Propose the idea of featuring a POW/MIA chair in athletic stadiums to the athletic department (A-39)

Tactic 2: Create and maintain an Instagram account and website representing the overall theme of the campaign (A-7, A-33)

Tactic 3: Develop and distribute design material about priority reregistration to help traditional students better interact with student veterans

Tactic 4: Create original content to post on CVA's existing Facebook and Twitter accounts (A-18, A-27)

Strategy B: Earn media placement in campus media to raise awareness of CVA amongst the campus community

Tactic 1: Secure a feature story in the on-campus newspaper, *The Crimson White* (A-42)

FACULTY & STAFF:

Objective 1: Increase faculty's awareness of student veterans on campus and in their classes by 10 percent. *Rationale: Survey results indicated faculty and staff were unaware of just how large the student veteran population was at UA. The highest recorded answer was between 100 and 300 - with between 301 and 500 as a close second - when, in actuality, there are over 1,000 student veterans on campus. The first objective for faculty and staff was to increase this awareness by 10 percent and, in turn, connect the universities faculty and staff with student veterans.*

Strategy A: Educate UA's faculty members about student veterans on campus

Tactic 1: Develop and distribute a student-veteran-friendly toolkit to help faculty members better interact with student veterans (A-4)

Tactic 2: Distribute materials to faculty and staff explaining the importance of priority registration

Strategy B: Use external communication materials to connect faculty and student veterans

Tactic 1: Create and maintain an Instagram account and website representing the overall theme of the campaign (A-7, A-33)

Tactic 2: Secure a feature story in the on-campus newspaper, *The Crimson White* (A-42)

The digital landscape played a major role in the 'In The Chair' campaign. The campaign focused on both internal and external communication for the client. Not only did the team tell numerous stories about who's in the chair, we also used our expertise to communicate on the client's behalf digitally. The team told the 'In The Chair' story through Instagram and the campaign website, along with running the client's social media platforms over the course of the month.

@InTheChairUA - Instagram With more than 75 million daily users and its extreme popularity among college students, Instagram's rapid growth in content storytelling and visual appeal validates why our team favored this social application to act as a catalyst for InTheChairUA.weebly.com throughout the entire campaign. The Instagram account @InTheChairUA launched on February 15, 2016 at 12:01 a.m. CDT, and by 1:30 p.m. CDT the following grew to 141 followers. With the assistance of the social media engagement program Crowdfire, our team's social network, and community outreach efforts, @InTheChairUA's following steadily grew each week. By March 15, 2016, the Instagram profile featured 31 stories and reached 566 Instagram users at the University of Alabama.

InTheChairUA.weebly.com The @InTheChairUA Instagram was in the front seat when driving traffic to InTheChairUA.weebly.com microspace. From featuring stories of individuals who sat in the chair to advocating for the POW/MIA chair implementation in each athletic stadium, the site covered all the bases when communicating the campaign efforts and key messages. During the month of the campaign, the site had 2,117 page views with 651 unique visitors.

Campus Veterans Association Twitter and Facebook For the duration of the campaign, the team took over the Campus Veterans Association's Twitter and Facebook profiles. Each week, the team created a social media plan that educated its following on the importance of priority registration, the basics of the GI Bill, the disconnection veterans feel on campus and more. We also utilized these platforms to promote and drive even more traffic to the campaign. Over the course of the campaign, our team distributed 93 tweets and used Crowdfire to increase CVA's Twitter following from 533 to 575. Our efforts earned 33,232 impressions, 106 link clicks, 85 retweets, 134 likes and two replies, which totaled a 2.6 percent engagement rate. Facebook posts throughout the campaign allowed CVA's profile to reach 19,498 users. The social media plan had a total engagement of 3,912 and gained 141 page likes as well as 977 page views.

STUDENT VETERANS:

Objective 1: ACHIEVED. Increase the total number of CVA active members by engaging five more student veterans by March 15, 2016.

- The 'In The Chair' campaign was able to increase the total number of CVA active members by five more student veterans by March 15, 2016.
- Loosa Brews generously donated their venue to host CVA's 'Pull Up A Chair' Informational Mixer for student veterans. The event took place on February 24, 2016 and focused on student veterans, dependents and service members. 'Pull Up a Chair' promoted CVA, grew the group's membership and raised awareness of the organization among student veterans.
- The newsletter was distributed via MailChimp to 765 student veterans. The first newsletter had an open rate of 50.5 percent.

Objective 2: EXCEEDED. To raise \$300 for the UA's Campus Veterans Association.

- The campaign raised over \$300 dollars for the Campus Veterans Association, excluding the business that must first go through corporate before writing a check to CVA.
- Wheelhouse Sports Pub fundraiser: The Wheelhouse Sports Pub fundraiser was on March 1, 2016 and open to any and all who chose to attend. The pub donated 10 percent of all drink proceeds, and the event raised \$115 for CVA.
- Black Warrior Brewing Company fundraiser: The Black Warrior Brewing Company fundraiser was March 3, 2016. It was open to any who chose to attend. Black Warrior Brewing Company donated 20 percent of drink proceeds and also had donation jars placed around the brewery. The event raised \$285 for CVA.
- BurgerFi fundraiser: The fundraiser with BurgerFi - "Buy a Burger for a Vet" - was March 7, 2016. Any one was welcome to come. BurgerFi donated 15 percent of proceeds from that night to CVA. The amount raised from this event is unknown due BurgerFi's corporate policy.

TRADITIONAL STUDENTS:

Objective I: EXCEEDED

To increase awareness of student veterans amongst traditional students by 10 percent by March 15, 2016. The 'In The Chair' campaign increased awareness of student veterans amongst traditional students at UA by over 20 percent during the month-long campaign. Efforts through social media, especially Instagram, were the main catalyst in garnering this awareness.

FACULTY & STAFF:

Objective I: ACHIEVED

To increase faculty awareness of student veterans on campus and in their classes by 10 percent. The 'In The Chair' campaign increased faculty's awareness of student veterans on campus and in their classes at UA by 10 percent during the month-long campaign. Our efforts through the distribution of a faculty tool kit proved to be the most effective way to reach faculty and raise their awareness of student veterans on campus and in their classes.

MEDIA COVERAGE:

The team was able to garner media attention for the 'In The Chair' campaign and CVA on the APR Website, run by The College of Communications and Information Sciences at UA, and The Crimson White, The University of Alabama's student newspaper. These outlets collectively reach thousands of students.

CALL FOR POLICY CHANGE:

Petition - When our work to get a POW/MIA chair in UA athletic facilities wasn't garnering as much support, we started a change.org petition to gather signatures of others who believe the university should have a chair. The petition began on March 11 when the athletic department stopped responding to our efforts to see a chair in the athletic stadiums, and it got 253 signatures. CVA will bring this petition to the University of Alabama Athletic Department in the future to try and get a POW/MIA chair in UA athletic stadiums.

Priority registration - CVA started a Student Veterans Strategic Council to tackle the problem of priority registration. We helped them by writing a letter of support for the council to send out to various student organizations to garner support for priority registration for student veterans. We facilitated meetings between candidates running in the Student Government Association elections who had both priority registration for student veterans and CVA included in their platforms. In addition, we helped select candidates to receive CVA's endorsement.

BUDGET:

Our team completed this campaign with the help of \$311.17 in generous in-kind donations in the form of our white chair featured on the Instagram, a POW/MIA Chair, and food for our 'Pull Up A Chair' event. We spent \$208.69 on printing costs.

Donations	(\$)	Donated by
White Chair	\$37.17	KAEGAN Corporation
POW/MIA Chair	\$135.00	CPE Solutions
Chick-fil-A Platter	\$139.00	Chick-fil-A
Total	\$311.17	

Expenses	(\$)	
Plansbooks (4)	\$72.96	
Printing	\$135.73	
Total	\$208.69	

'In The Chair'...

- In primary research we surveyed 416 individuals on the University of Alabama campus
- CVA membership increased from 224 to 250 official members and 15 to 20 active members
- Our efforts raised a grand total of \$400 for the Campus Veterans Association
- Approximately 253 people pledged their support for a POW/MIA in UA athletic stadiums
- Thirty-one individuals sat in the chair and shared their story
- The Instagram profile received 4,126 likes across all 39 posts, averaging 106 likes per photo

The 'In The Chair' campaign had a striking impact on the UA campus. 'In The Chair' connected traditional students to student veterans and united the campus to support those who have risked so much to protect our freedom. This campaign encouraged student veterans, traditional students, faculty and staff on campus to tell stories of how the military has impacted their lives and why it is so important to support both student veterans and their rights on campus.

The valued partnerships with CVA, Veteran and Military Affairs and UA will help further advocate for student veterans on campus. The 'In The Chair' campaign is more than a social media campaign. It's a movement for change based on an understanding and awareness of student veterans. We brought together a diverse group of students who believe in the student veteran population and the value of creating strong community ties.

This community, especially CVA, is important when thinking about the student veteran population. Tyler Hohbach is just one example of someone who has been positively influenced by this organization and the community he found.

"I know if I struggled, others are struggling too. Some even more than I did. I want student veterans and dependents to know that CVA is their new unit. We watch out for each other. We fight to ensure that no veteran or dependent feels alone on campus and that they have somewhere to turn when things get tough," Hohbach said.

The 'In The Chair' campaign reintroduced the Campus Veterans Association to the Alabama community while reinforcing its goals and the importance of taking care of veterans transitioning to civilian life.

"Bateman has been absolutely incredible. I cannot even describe how much they have helped the Campus Veterans Association."